

Committee on Human Services

Testimony for House Bill 189

An Act Establishing an Advisory Council on Services for Persons with Traumatic Brain Injury

Billye Simmers, Chair, Connecticut Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board

March 9, 2010

Good Day Members of the Committee on Human Services:

My name is Billye Simmers. I am here as the Chairperson of the statewide Connecticut Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board, which has been active in our state since 2004. **I am supporting Bill 189: An Act Establishing an Advisory Council on Services for Persons with Traumatic Brain Injury.**

The current Connecticut TBI Advisory Board was developed through a grant to the Department of Social Services from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The HRSA Grant came to an end in March 2009. Since that time the Connecticut TBI Advisory Board has continued to function under the existing By-Laws, which were established under the HRSA Grant. The current TBI Advisory Board's priorities and accomplishments are outlined in an attachment to my testimony. Also attached is the Membership Roster of the current TBI Advisory Board.

I am, also, a parent of a child who experienced a traumatic brain injury in 1982. We were living in Alabama, when my son was beginning his freshman year at the University of Alabama. We had a serious ice storm that winter, and my son was involved in a car accident suffering a severe brain injury. In 1982, there were very few resources across the nation for persons with brain injury. Although my son has had a very good outcome, we are acutely aware of the impact of TBI on the individual, as well as on the family. Much has changed, but there is still much to be done to develop adequate community-based supports and services for persons with brain injury.

The place to start is the establishment of The Connecticut Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Council /Board to advise the Governor, as well as the state agencies that provide supports and services for persons with disabilities in order to address the needs of Persons with Traumatic Brain Injury.

Regarding the composition of the Connecticut TBI Advisory Council /Board, I have attached some recommendations for your consideration.

If I can be of further service, please contact me.

Phone: 203-525-2725

Email: Billye.simmers@sbcglobal.net

Thank you for your time.

Recommendations for your consideration from the Connecticut Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board:

1. Establishment of an advisory council /board to the Governor and the Commissioner of Social Services to address the needs of persons with traumatic brain injury.
2. Recommendations for Board membership:
 - (A) Commissioner of Social Services or the commissioner's designee;
 - (B) Commissioner of Mental Health & Addiction Services or the commissioner's designee;
 - (C) Commissioner of Children and Families or the commissioner's designee;
 - (D) Commissioner of Public Health or the commissioner's designee;
 - (E) Representative from the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services;
 - (F) Commissioner of Developmental Services or the commissioner's designee
 - (G) Commissioner of Veterans' Affairs or the commissioners' designee;
 - (H) Commissioner of Correction or the commissioner's designee;
 - (I) Commissioner of Economic and Community Development or the commissioner's designee;
 - (J) Adjutant General of the Connecticut National Guard or the Adjutant General's designee;
 - (K) Executive Director of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities or the executive director's designee;
 - (L) Commissioner of the Department of Education or the commissioner's designee;
 - (M) two Legislators;
 - (N) Executive Director of the Brain Injury Association of Connecticut or the executive director's designee.
3. Additional members appointed by the Governor:
 - (A) A representative from an organization serving veterans;
 - (B) A representative of a federally-recognized tribe located in Connecticut;
 - (C) A neuropsychologist who has experience working with persons with TBI;
 - (D) **A social worker who has experience working with persons with TBI;**
 - (E) A rehabilitation specialist, such as a speech pathologist, vocational rehabilitation counselor, occupational therapist or physical therapist, who has experience working with persons with TBI;
 - (F) **THREE** persons living with the consequences of TBI;
 - (G) **THREE** family members of a person with TBI;
 - (H) **TWO** members of the public who have experience with issues related to TBI.
 - Each member appointed by the Governor shall be appointed, to the extent practicable, to represent both rural and urban areas of the state, **as well as a representation of the varied ethnic communities in Connecticut.**

Connecticut TBI Advisory Board

Summary of Accomplishments

Prepared by: Billye Simmers, Chairperson, March, 2010

In 1996 Congress authorized by Federal Law (PL 104-166) to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for the conduct of expanded studies and establishment of innovative programs with respect to traumatic brain injury (Congressional Record, Vol. 142 (1996)). Subsequently, the Health Resources and Services Administration / Maternal Child Health Bureau offered grant funding to assist states in developing programs and services for persons with TBI. In April 2004, the Connecticut Department of Social Services was awarded a TBI Planning Grant to begin the work of developing an integrated and coordinated system of care for people with TBI. One of the objectives of this grant was to establish a TBI Advisory Board to be comprised of members from public and private agencies with a statewide mandate and purview.

After several meetings, a core group of fourteen (14) individuals, representing state agencies, persons with TBI, family members of persons with TBI, service providers, underserved populations, and the Brain Injury Association of CT (BIAC) came together to form a stable group of Advisory Committee members. This group became responsible to oversee the data collection and analysis of current TBI services in Connecticut and to identify gaps in the existing system. This group also reviewed and guided the production of the Statewide Action Plan for TBI to address the gaps in the system of services. The full report is available online through the DSS web site (www.ct.gov/dss).

Highlights of the Action Plan Priorities:

- ☒ Priority 1: Excellent services will be provided to persons with TBI in Connecticut
- ☒ Priority 2: Disparity in Brain Injury Services will be eliminated
- ☒ Priority 3: Coordination and Integration of services must take place among State Agencies
- ☒ Priority 4: Multi-cultural Public Awareness, Education, Prevention, and Outreach will be made available
- ☒ Priority 5: Affordable, accessible housing will be made available to persons with TBI
- ☒ Priority 6: Services will be made available to non-waiver eligible persons with TBI

In Connecticut, DSS is the Lead Agency for persons with disabilities, including persons with TBI. The Commissioner of the DSS has made a commitment to the TBI Advisory Committee to provide support staff for the on-going work of this Committee.

In November 2005, DSS was awarded a TBI Implementation Grant to continue the work of establishing an integrated and coordinated system of care for people with TBI. During the period of the Implementation Grant the TBI Advisory Committee created several sub-committees to facilitate the work outlined in the Statewide Action Plan.

Listed on the next page is an overview of the work of these sub-committees.

The TBI Coordination Committee has been instrumental in facilitating the development of the following collaborative agreements between state agencies:

1. DSS ABI Waiver Program and DMHAS ABI Community Services Program: In order to better serve clients who access both the DSS ABI Waiver and the DMHAS ABI Services and to facilitate communication within the client community teams.
2. DCF and DMHAS Young Adult Services (YAS) and ABI Community Services Program: In order to facilitate a smoother transition between DCF services and DMHAS services and to outline roles for DCF, YAS, and the ABI Community Services.
3. DOC and DMHAS work collaboratively through an established interagency committee to better serve persons with TBI in DOC requiring specialized supports during their release from prison.
4. DDS and DMHAS work collaboratively through an established interagency committee to review appropriate services for persons with TBI served through both agencies.
5. BIAC offers training on TBI to any state or private agency for better awareness of the issues.

The TBI Screening Tool Committee developed a TBI Screening Tool, training modules for agencies, and recommendations for “next steps” to serve any person who screens positive for TBI

The Minimum Standards Committee developed a Certificate Program for TBI Providers in conjunction with Tunxis College. This program was implemented in January 2010.

The Cultural Competence/ Outreach and Awareness Committee sponsored numerous education and outreach activities to promote the awareness and prevention of TBI. These activities include the production of a banner, which has been hung at various locations around the state, a presentation of TBI outreach materials at the Legislative Office Building, and strategically placed billboards with a TBI prevention message for the general public.

In the spring of 2009, the Connecticut TBI Advisory Committee changed its name to the Connecticut TBI Advisory Board, revised its Mission Statement and By-Laws, and made a recommitment to the original Statewide Action Plan Priorities. As time progresses the CT TBI Advisory Board will continue to make a difference in the lives of persons with TBI.

The significance of the impact of TBI on individuals, their families and communities cannot be overstated. According to the National Center for Disease Control, 2% of the population in the United States is living with the consequences of long-term disability from TBI. This was translated for Connecticut through a report from the Department of Public Health. DPH compiled data through the Injury Prevention Program: Traumatic Brain Injury Surveillance in Connecticut 2000 – 2004. If you would like additional information you may contact me by phone (860) 262-5579 or by email Billie.Simmers@po.state.ct.us

Definition of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI): an insult to the brain, not of degenerative or congenital nature caused by an external force that may produce a diminished or altered state of consciousness, which results in impairment of cognitive abilities or physical functioning. It can also result in the disturbance of behavioral or emotional functioning. These impairments may be either temporary or permanent and may cause partial or total functional disability or psychosocial maladjustment. Approved by the Brain Injury Association of America, 1996

TBI Advisory Board Roster

	Name	Organization	E-Mail	Phone	Start Date	End Date	Latest End Date
1	Allen, Gary	Survivor	GDAllen12@Aol.com	860-523-4438	1/1/2007	1/1/2010	
2	Bannish, Dan	DOC	Dan.bannish@po.state.ct.us	860-692.7651	1/1/2007	State	N/A
3	Chelednik, Heidi	Service Provider A.B.D.	hchelednik@abilitybeyonddisability.org		1/1/2008	1/1/2011	
4	Cochran, Sage	Survivor	scochran@biact.org	860-721.8111	1/1/2007	1/1/2010	
5	Culbertson, Jim	Provider Agency	jpculbertson@sbcglobal.net	860-437-3558	1/19/2010	1/1/2013	
6	Gelman-Wegener, Liane	Family Member	liane.gelman-wegener@ct.gov		1/19/2010	1/1/2013	
7	Gibbons, Lile - Rep - (R)	Legislature	Lile.Gibbons@cga.ct.gov		1/19/2010	State	N/A
8	Graziani, Ted - Rep (D)	Legislature	Ted.Graziani@cga.ct.gov		1/19/2010	State	N/A
9	Hanson, Kristy	DSS appointment	khanson@voa-gny.org	203-612-9541	2/16/2010	1/1/2013	
10	Harvey, Sarah	DOE-BSE	sarah.harvey@ct.gov	860-713-6936	2/13/2009	State	N/A
11	Kramer, Carrie	BIAC	ckramer@biact.org	860-721 8111	1/1/2007	BIAC	N/A
12	Leary, Morgan	DSS appointment	mleary@kennedyctr.org	203-449-5314	2/16/2010	1/1/2013	
13	Long, Dorian	DSS	dorian.long@ct.gov	860-424.5964	1/1/2007	State	N/A
14	Lourie, Sara	DCF	Sara.Lourie@ct.gov	860-560.5096	1/1/2007	State	N/A
15	Lyons, Charley	Family Member	Sealion54@aol.com	860- 644-1284	1/1/2007	1/1/2010	
16	Merwin, Mari	Asian Family Services	merwinm@crtct.org	860-951-8770	1/1/2008	1/1/2011	
17	O'Neil-Wild, GERALYN	CCDAV	gwild@ct.cadv.org	860-282-7899			
18	Palmer, Amy	Serv. Prov Assoc Neurol	apalmer@anscneuro.com	203-333-1133	1/1/2007	1/1/2010	
19	Peters, Julie	BIAC	julie@biact.org	860-721.8111	1/1/2007	BIAC	N/A
20	Rothstein, Tara	DSS appointment	trothste@stfranciscare.org	860-714-2210	2/16/2010	2/16/2013	
21	Sandford, Jr. John	Family Member	john34gr@aol.com	860-749.6031	1/1/2007	1/1/2010	
22	Sears, Craig	Survivor	searscraig1@yahoo.com	203-563-9940	1/1/2007	1/1/2010	
23	Simmers, Billye	DMHAS	Billve.simmers@po.state.ct.us	860-262-5579	1/1/2007	State	N/A
24	Storch, Marion	DPH	Marion.storch@				
25	Werboff, Susan	PAPD	susan.werboff@po.state.us	860-297-4326	1/1/2007	State	N/A
26	Zoubek, Betty	DDS	betty.zoubek@ct.gov	860-859-5404	10/20/2009	State	N/A
27	VACANT	DSS appointment					
28	VACANT	BRS representative				State	N/A
29	VACANT	DPH representative				State	N/A
	Gafford-Alexander Sylvia	DSS	Sylvia.Gafford-Alexander@ct.gov	860-424.5058	1/1/2007	1/1/2010	
	Montelle Donna	DSS Staff support	donna.montelle@ct.gov	860-424-5668			

3/6/2010